

THE TELEGRAPH WIRE

COMICS & CONIK

ISSUE 21

FREE!

CROSSFIRE™

by MARK EVANIER and
DAN SPIEGLE





This is the penultimate FIT TO BE TIED, with double-barreled logos courtesy of Steve Walsh (above) and Richard Bruning (next page), both of whom get a tip of the editorial cap for coming through in a clinch.

The following discourse is perhaps more properly the purview of my associate Tom Walton, Director of Public Relations for Comics & Comix, but if you're willing to bear with a rookie in the field of promotions, you'll see that my heart, at least, is in the right place.

Now that the direct sales market has rejuvenated what appeared, two decades ago, to be a dying entertainment form, it is nonetheless becoming more and more apparent that the specialty customer no longer provides a sufficiently healthy consumer base for the continued growth and prosperity of the comics industry. With the incredible volume of new product lining the racks and competing for today's consumer dollar, it is inevitable that some of this product (and its manufacturers) will fall by the wayside unless a greater demand is created. All too often, lately, one hears the comics fan's complaint that he would love to buy many more of the titles available on the current market, but he simply can't afford to. By grooming and catering to the specialty customer, the direct market may have saved the industry's hide--but at the cost, apparently, of a limited demand. And given the current marketplace supply, demand can only be increased by going beyond the specialty customer. It's finally time, in other words, for comics to infiltrate the general public again!

I don't mean to make this sound like some cheap spy flick--believe me, it's a serious concern shared by all levels of the business. And it's compounded by the fact that the general public tends to entertain one of the following two attitudes towards comics:

(1) Either they're not even aware that comics exist (as unthinkable to you and me as that may sound), or

(2) They simply dismiss all comics as "kids' stuff."

Neither of these attitudes can be defeated in isolation; they must be tackled in tandem. It does no good to make the general public aware of comics if comics offer nothing, ultimately, to cater to the tastes and sensibilities of the general public.

Let's get serious now: Does anyone honestly believe that the average consumer, aged 18-35 years, entertains a burning passion for superheroes? (The question is too obviously ludicrous to be anything more than rhetorical.) I think it goes without saying that, for the most part, the superhero genre merely nurtures the power fantasies of male adolescents--who admittedly form the largest percentage of all comics buyers. But why preach to the converted if you're trying to expand your market base? Clearly, it behooves all publishers to explore different genres (and formats, for that matter) of graphic storytelling as a means of fostering greater respect for and thereby encouraging greater interest in the medium.

On the other hand, as the valiant efforts of a few publishers have sadly proved, offering a variety of genres, styles, and formats also does little to expand the consumer base if the general public continues to remain oblivious to the existence of our industry and its product.

How, then, can our industry help to introduce the mass market to the world of comics?

Selling the product outside of the usual industry outlets is one means of achieving this goal. Comics stores that open up in malls, for example, tend to have a much more varied clientele than the typical neighborhood shop. More often than not, customers of all ages and both sexes will stroll in, attracted by the books' bright colors, and will exclaim their surprise at seeing comics "still in existence."



As Marvel Comics has clearly realized, distribution of comics to bookstores and toy stores has a similar effect to that of the mall specialty shop, in terms of attracting new readership. Again, simply displaying the books in an area that already benefits from a broad consumer base inevitably introduces a greater variety of people to the medium.

Promoting the product outside of the comics trade journals is another smart tactic. First Comics' SHATTER SPECIAL, drawn by Mike Saenz using an Apple Macintosh, was heavily promoted in computer trade journals, bringing comics in general to the attention of the computer industry--and this promotion was certainly responsible, at least in part, for the sellout of not only one, but two printings of the book!

Both Marvel and Comico, with G.I. JOE and ROBOTECH respectively, have taken advantage of television advertising as a means of reaching vast numbers of potential new readers. As an adjunct to this, though the "comics cultural elite" tends to snipe at TV, movie, or toy adaptations, these comics often enjoy more of a mass market appeal--particularly when they're done well--than the regular run of super-heroes.

Media promotion is always a valuable tool--especially when you don't have to pay for it! For some good tips on how to make terrific use of your local media (newspapers, radio stations, and TV networks), check out the latest installment of "Walton's Wisdom" in the 6/7/85 issue of THE COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE. In that column, Tom Walton gives his incredible account of how he parlayed Comics & Comix' acquisition of a copy of SUPERMAN #1 into a nationally-run news story!

Donations and gifts are yet another means of bringing comics into the public limelight. Last summer, Marvel donated 10,000 comics to be given away at the Oakland A's "Superheroes Day"--held to honor society's real life heroes, firemen and policemen--as well as sending out several costumed characters, including Captain America and the Hulk, to appear at the A's ballgame.

In addition to bringing greater visibility to the medium, Eclipse Comics also performed a public service by donating 5000 comics to last summer's annual Children's Hospital Benefit Battsud Regatta in the Bay Area.

The NEW TEEN TITANS "drug books" published by OC Comics and distributed throughout U.S. elementary schools are another example of a public service that also benefits the comics industry.

In addition to hospitals and schools, comics can be donated to libraries and to doctors' and dentists' offices. If, for example, a retailer were to donate just 25 comics a month--each stamped with the store address, of course--to a local pediatrician's office, not only is it likely that the store's sales would increase, but the retailer could pat himself on the back, as well, for doing a good deed!

Giving away comics is something everyone can do--not merely the publisher, distributor, or retailer. Depending on your budget, graphic novels or complete mini/maxi-series make great birthday or Christmas gifts. If you like your hobby, why not turn on a friend?

Finally--and perhaps more significant than any of the above--if we want comics to come out of the closet, as it were, then it's time for comic book aficionados to come out of the closet and squarely face their work and/or hobby with some professionalism and pride. Unfortunately, even within our own industry, there is a bad attitude towards comics. Granted, the stigma has come from outside, but we, the stigmatized, have shouldered that attitude and adopted it as our own. Sure, we preen ourselves and strut around any convention room floor. Our comics creators are big superstars and fandom in general is proud of its cult status. But what happens when the convention doors close for the night? What happens to all that breast-beating when we're out in the "real" world?

We certainly can't expect the general public to become aware of us and respect our business when we ourselves hide it, literally and figuratively, in some dingy, dark corner!

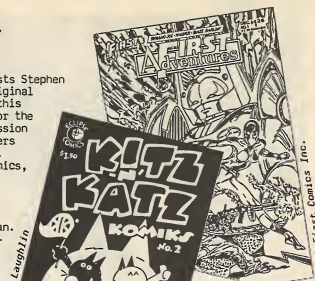
This is no shuck-and-jive sociology tract, folks--it's just some truth. How often have you heard a comics shop referred to as a "bookstore"? How many times, in a social situation, does someone proclaim that he publishes/writes/draws for a living, but neglects to mention what it is that he publishes/writes/draws, or begrudgingly mutters "comics" when pressed on the matter? How many of you can even unblushingly read a comic on the bus???

Hold your head up and if you can't take any pride in your interest in comics, at least stop being ashamed of it. I'm not advocating any street-corner sermonizing--just the adoption of a healthy attitude. And it's something that everyone--from the publisher right on down to you, the consumer--can and should do, for the benefit of all.

MAIN LINES

To begin with: a public service message: SWAMP THING artists Stephen Bissette and John Totleben have learned that some of their original art apparently disappeared from the DC offices in January of this year. The artists are offering a no-questions-asked reward for the return of, or any information leading directly to the repossession of, these missing pages: pp. 1-14 of SWAMP THING #34, the covers of SWAMP THING #29-34, and the cover of SWAMP THING ANNUAL #2. Bissette and Totleben can be contacted c/o SWAMP THING, DC Comics, 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, 10103.

And now, the news in a nutshell:
 Eduardo Barreto will take over the pencilling of THE NEW TEEN TITANS beginning with issue #13, coinciding with the onset of some major shakeups planned for the team by writer Marv Wolfman. ...The WIRE's own Eric Yarber is one of the writers contributing to the first issue of Eclipse's TALES OF TERROR, due out in July...Also in July and also from Eclipse: THE ROCKETEER GRAPHIC NOVEL, which collects all five Rocketeer episodes by Dave Stevens, and MIRACLEMAN by Alan Moore, the first independent color comic to be priced at 75¢...In August, DNAGENTS will follow in MIRACLEMAN's footsteps with a price cut to 75¢ and a re-numbering of the series, beginning with vol. II no. 1...That same month, Eclipse will begin distributing Bob Laughlin's KITZ 'N' KATZ comic, starting with issue #2. Readers are advised to keep their eyes peeled for the hilarious cats, a longtime favorite here at the WIRE...WHISPER, by Steven Grant and Rich Larson, formerly published by the now-defunct Capital Comics, will join the First Comics line-up this summer, starting off with WHISPER SPECIAL #1 in August and then moving to a rotating slot in First's new anthology series, FIRST ADVENTURES, which will also feature "Blaze Barlow and the Eternity Command" by Peter B. Gillis and Kelley Jones, and "Dynamo Joe" by John Ostrander and Doug Rice...Speaking of anthology titles, Continuity's ECHO OF FUTURE PAST will add two new features to its line-up, beginning with issue #6, shipping in late July. The first is "Torpedo," written by European creator Sanchez Abuli and drawn by the great Alex Toth. The second new feature is "AE-35," written by Tim Ryan, pencilled by Will Jungkuntz, inked by Neal Adams, and colored by Arthur Suydam...The Bay Area's own Arthur Adams is the cover artist for THE X-MEN SPECIAL FOR ETHIOPIA, the benefit comic featuring 54 top talents and scheduled for release in August...With their flagship title, CONQUEROR, having been nominated for one of the prestigious Eagle Awards, in the "Favorite New Comic Title" category, Harrier Comics has just announced the October release of CONQUEROR UNIVERSE, featuring work by a number of Britain's best new professional artists...KATY KEENE creator Bill Woggon teams up with NEIL THE HORSE artist Barb Rausch for VICKI VALENTINE #1, a special one-shot to be released in June by Renegade Press and a must for all fans of fashion, romance, and paper dolls...A new publisher, Sirius Comics, will make their debut in August with GREYLORE, a six-issue series written by David Campiti and drawn by Bo Hampton...Vortex Comics' KELVIN MACE #1, by Ty Templeton and Klaus Schoenefeld, features "the most violent and irresponsible hero in history," and should be out by the time you read this...PANDA KHAN, created by Dave Garcia and Monica Sharp, will be premiering as the back-up feature in A DISTANT SOIL #6, due out from WaRP Graphics in late June...Comico will be premiering two new ROBOTTECH titles in July: ROBOTTECH MASTERS by writer Mike Baron (of NEXUS and BADGER fame), penciller Neil Vokes, and inker Rich Rankin, and ROBOTTECH THE NEW GENERATION, whose permanent creative team has yet to be decided.



(C) Bob Laughlin

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(C) Harrier Comics



(C) Bill Woggon

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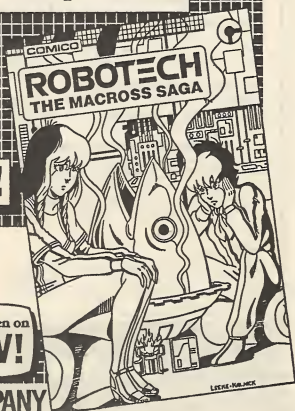


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In 1978 Eclipse Comics burst upon the scene by producing the first graphic album for the direct sales market. Since then, Eclipse has blazed new trails by bringing you the first all-baxter, laser-scanned line of comics. In fact, many Eclipse innovations have become industry standards.

Eclipse does it again.

This July, an extraordinary event in the history of comics is coming to the USA: Eclipse Comics presents Miracleman, the first independent color comic for under a buck.

Miracleman is coming in color!

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Written by fan favorite Alan Moore and illustrated by Garry Leach and Alan Davis, Miracleman has been hailed worldwide as the best superhero series being published today.

In fact, British fandom has bestowed more prestigious Eagle awards upon Miracleman than any other character in the past two years.

There's more!

In August, the fabulous DNAgents will slash their price in half! That's right, the DNAgents for 75¢, a mere handful of change; the same price as the Teen Titans. And that's only the beginning!



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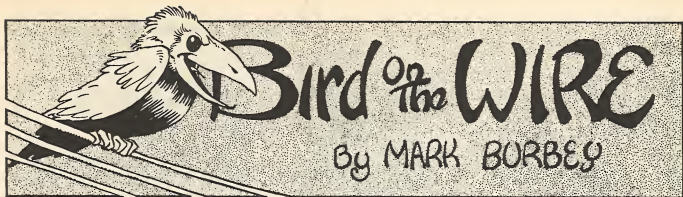
The revolution begins in July.

Now you can make your book selections based on the quality of the story; price need never be a factor in the buying decision again.

Eclipse is dedicated to bringing you, the fan, the finest comics possible for the best possible price!



Comics worth reading!



In a medium which got its start being funny, there are relatively few comic books currently available which succeed in making us laugh. Oh, there are quite a few valiant and not-so-valiant attempts in the arena of humor comics, ranging from the inspired ghastly insanity of MR. MONSTER to the hilariously entertaining "D.R. and Quinch" in 2000 A.D. and the highly original terrytoon machinations of HUGO, all the way down to the ho-hum cheese dip sameness of every issue of GROD, the arthritic humor of MAD, and the time-warped regularity of the ever-present Archie line. We've even got superhero humor with the likes of AMBUSH BUG, THE LEGION OF SUBSTITUTE HEROES, PETER PORKER, NORMALMAN, and MEGATON MAN.

More often than not, however, reading a supposed "funny" comic book is rather like watching a TV sitcom: you sit there and watch it through to the end, but if you stop to think about it, you realize that you didn't laugh once during the entire half-hour. It manages to hold your attention, but it doesn't succeed in the most important way: it doesn't make you laugh. Have you ever laughed at something in an Archie comic? Does GROD make you laugh? Or MAD?

If so, stop reading because you're pathetically beyond hope. If not, check out NEAT STUFF, cover-blurbed as "Way-out comics for way-out people." In fact, the often bizarre, often scatological humor of NEAT STUFF is definitely not for everyone's taste. If, however, your sense of humor is already of a twisted, outre nature, then NEAT STUFF may be just what you didn't even know you were looking for.

Cartoonist Peter Bagge has been around for awhile, churning out mini-comix as well as doing work for such publications as HIGH TIMES, SWANK, and SCREW. Most recently, he assumed editorship of WEIROD, taking the reins from Robert Crumb. But even WEIROD fails to be as satisfying as NEAT STUFF. Though at first glance Bagge's unique artistic stylings may appear sloppy and slightly amateur, closer inspection reveals that this is the work of no beginner. Superficially, Bagge's work invites comparison with men like Tex Avery, Robert Crumb, Basil Wolverton, and Harvey Kurtzman, all acknowledged masters of exaggeration and inspired yet disciplined madness. Beneath the surface, like any good satirist, Bagge uses humor to bluntly illuminate our many all-too-human foibles. In a one-pager called "A Few Words From Studs Kirby," Studs tells us, "My friends know not to call me when the A-Team is on!" and we see him reading READER'S DIGEST, eating TV dinners, and guzzling Miller's beer, all beloved bastions of American tastelessness. It's obvious that Bagge takes great pleasure in setting a mirror of stark reality before the eyes of America, initially making one laugh at funny images, but ultimately leaving the reader with the disquieting realization that the funny face he's gazing at is his

own, or at least that of someone he knows. One can either take that as a negative factor and ignore NEAT STUFF altogether, or one can act with intelligence and security and have a good laugh and realize that perhaps we all take ourselves a little too seriously.

To engage in intellectual pontification examining the implications and ramifications of humor is rather akin to regarding the subject of sex from a strictly cold scientific viewpoint. Humor, *good humor*, comes naturally to the humorist, as good music is merely playing in the mind of the composer and all he does is transpire it to paper. The muse needn't be whipped into submission, forced to inspire on command. When one reads MAD, for example, it's obvious that the writers and artists are simply performing a function, creating through the auspices of tired formula, essentially performing the same act, year in, year out. Bagge is drawing from life and is gifted with a finely tuned yet perfectly clear-minded wit which appeals simultaneously to my own weird sense of humor and my peculiarly clear and realistic, and perhaps cynical, view of life.

NEAT STUFF doesn't *try* to be funny. It simply *is* funny. But it's more than that. It's everything that was wonderful about underground comix, where a good life-inspired, spontaneous laugh was all one needed to "keep on truckin'." And unlike the ephemeral nature of forced humor, humor like Bagge's sticks with you, consciously for awhile, subconsciously for a much longer while. You'll find yourself picking it up again and again. Perhaps it will become your favorite bathroom comic and you won't care if it remains in mint condition or not, because NEAT STUFF is not something you buy and bag and forget until its "value" has inflated high enough like a lackluster copy of ELEMENTALS #1 or TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES. NEAT STUFF is to read, to enjoy, to share, to keep. Furthermore, NEAT STUFF is not only neat, it's brilliant.

AMERICAN LEATHERETTE: Speaking of humor, I can only express rather appalled amazement at how unfunny Alan Moore's Mark Thrust stories were in AMERICAN FLAGS! #21-22. Not only is the "story" absolutely devoid of anything resembling charm or genuine humor, but the art by Don Lomax exudes an altogether unappealing smarminess, possessing all the subtlety and wit of an issue of HUSTLER. I can only hope that by the time this column sees print, Moore's subsequent Raul-the-Cat stories prove redeeming. Alan Moore has written some of the finest comic stories published during this year and last, and I've got no doubt that he will continue to do so, but these two stories in particular are unworthy of his growing reputation.

COMICS & COMIX CALENDAR

On a similar level, Howard Chaykin seems to be dragging AMERICAN FLAGG! into ever deeper depths of leatherness and kinkiness. The basic storyline itself continues to be entertaining and compelling, but the milieu Chaykin chooses to place his stories in is dangerously close to breaching the already thin line between titillation and pornography. Don't get me wrong, I am far from a prude on the subject of sex or the unadorned human form, but what Chaykin is doing here smacks of something else entirely. An occasional scene of nudity or sex in LOVE AND ROCKETS, for example, is either appealing on a normal, healthy level (undeniable allusions to bisexuality aside) or perfectly apropos and chilling such as in the Errata Stigmata episode in issue #11. But it's always integral to the story at hand, and the Hernandez Brothers never engage in pointless kinkiness for the sheer hell of it. I like Chaykin's work and until recently was enjoying AMERICAN FLAGG! (despite the often confusing narrative flow), but I would really like to know how he expects readers to respond to this kind of blatant sleaziness. I suspect that he's merely venting his own personal fantasies, because if I thought he expected the readers to be turned on by this sort of thing, I just might feel insulted. I've always felt that a certain sense of restraint was essential in any artistic endeavor, and that the old adage "less is more" is invariably true and important to remember. Howie, however, apparently believes that a crude leather-clad beaver shot is more alluring than an intelligent woman in a suggestive bikini, or that more is somehow better. But for my money, the panel of Penny Century in a one-piece bathing suit in LOVE AND ROCKETS #9 (page 6) was far more appealing, tasteful, and sexually attractive than any of Chaykin's plethora of open-legged prostitutes.

We can only hope that the 700 Club doesn't get a look at AMERICAN FLAGG!, or even worse, some reactionary parent who might assume that the permissiveness evident in AMERICAN FLAGG! is indicative of what goes on in all comic books, thereby worsening the already bad image of comics and making it increasingly difficult for artists to explore genuinely adult topics in comics, as opposed to indulging in mere sexual pyrotechnics.

Then again, perhaps I'm the one who's over-reacting. After all, it's been 30 years since Citizen Wertham wielded his frothing, vitriolic pen and incited an already paranoid America against the communist comic book scourge calculated to corrupt our children and transform them into slaving, psychotic killers. Besides that, not enough people take comics sufficiently seriously anymore to consider them a threat--and who really listens to the 700 Club or the local PTA, anyway? Still, a modicum of good taste and artistic discretion in something like AMERICAN FLAGG! would be appreciated, not to mention a genuine attempt to be truly creative and original--unless, of course, you consider sleazy Barbary Coast lingerie and indiscriminate, debasing sex creative and original. Rather than create a palpable vision of a morally decayed future, these elements serve only to suggest a frivolously decadent present, in which thinly-veiled soft pornography is peddled as entertainment.

What do you think? I'd be interested in hearing diverse opinions.

See you at the racks, boys and girls.

Mark Burbey has written about comics and film for such publications as RBCC, CASCADE COMIX MONTHLY, CINEMACABRE, SWANK, and THE COMICS JOURNAL.

Saturday, June 1

Final judging of C&C's MODEL BUILDING CONTEST with special guest judge STEVE ANDERSON, GSA Creations Production Manager. Join the fun at the new Palo Alto store, 2 p.m.

Saturday, June 8

Spin your own discount with the C&C WHEEL OF FORTUNE! Discounts are good all day at our Citrus Heights store.

Saturday, June 15

Comics & Comix presents another crowd-pleasing AUCTION--this time at our Sacramento store, 5-7 p.m. Great fun and great deals!

Bay Area customers can get their deals all day at our Lombard Street store in San Francisco by spinning a discount on the WHEEL OF FORTUNE.

Saturday, June 22

The WHEEL OF FORTUNE moves around to our Solano Mall store. Join the fun and spin to win!

Sunday, June 23

Final judging of the MODEL BUILDING CONTEST being held at our Berkeley store, with special guest judge STEVE PERRIN, fantasy artisan extraordinaire. 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners will be selected at 2 p.m.

Saturday, June 29

Special guest judge STEVE PERRIN will also be selecting the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners at C&C's MINIATURE FANTASY FIGURE PAINTING CONTEST. Join us as gamers, artists, and fans display their work, 2 p.m. at our Citrus Heights store.

In the meantime, South Bay residents can spin their own discount with the WHEEL OF FORTUNE all day at the Palo Alto store.

Saturday, July 6

The WHEEL OF FORTUNE rolls over to the Sacramento store for more all-day deals!

Saturday, July 13

Spin to win with the WHEEL OF FORTUNE, all day at our Berkeley store.

Saturday, July 20

Guess what? You got it! More WHEEL OF FORTUNE discount fun, this time at our Irving Street store in San Francisco. Discounts are good all day, on all Comics & Comix merchandise.



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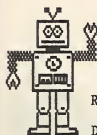
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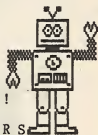
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LET US LAUNCH YOU INTO THE 21st CENTURY!!!



Crossfire TM and (C) Evanier and Meuniot
Art (C) Dan Spigle

The cover of CROSSFIRE #9, by Dan Spigle.

The time is long overdue to recognize two very fine professionals in the comics field: Dan Spigle and Mark Evanier.

Dan Spigle has been drawing comics since HOP-ALONG CASSIDY—his first taste of comic art, back in 1949. Back in the '50s when artists were recognized by style, not names, Dan was the artist that every kid wanted to copy...an artist's artist. Rumor has it that Dan works from an easel—an unusual way to work for today's artist. But maybe that's why his art draws the reader into the story with its bold sweeping lines and strong action figures.

Although we focused primarily on Dan's art techniques in what follows, Mark Evanier added a lot of interesting input to the interview. Mark is a jack-of-all-trades in the writing field. He's written everything from TV skits for celebrities to comic books...and not only is he prolific, but he's great at everything he does! Add the solid storytelling ability of Mark Evanier to Dan Spigle's spectacular artwork and you have CROSSFIRE, published by California's own Eclipse Comics.

This interview took place in March '85 over the phone. Mark and Dan live in Los Angeles and graciously took a half hour out of their busy schedules to talk to me. I transcribed the interview and Mark edited it.

Special thanks to both Dan and Mark for providing us not only with illustrations but also with a terrific cover for this issue of the WIRE.

-- WENDI LEE

CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE

An interview with Dan Spigle and Mark Evanier

WENDI LEE: Dan, tell me a little about your past work in comics.

DAN SPIEGLE: It started in 1950. HOPALONG CASSIDY was a comic strip that I created with Bill Boyd. It ran for six years. It was syndicated by King Features. Then, I went on to Western Publishing. I did comic books...mainly western comic books.

MARK EVANIER: Dan did the comic book adaptation of the MAVERICK TV show. He did SEA HUNT and THE HARDY BOYS...an amazing array. He also became the world's expert at Disney adaptations and at drawing Hayley Mills and Annette Funicello!

DAN: Yeah, I did most of the Disney movies. All of the movies I did were live action adventure.

WENDI: I notice that CROSSFIRE has a lot of action. You seem to draw the reader into the story by your use of bleed-off panels and insets. How do you determine when to use these techniques?

DAN: It sort of depends on the action itself. You just try to make the action flow through the page. The reader's eye runs through the page, following it. It just happens.

MARK: One of the amazing things about Dan's eye for designing a page is that he does things that he's constantly unaware of. I have to keep pointing out to him how he's arranged things to lead the reader's eye around the page. It's very instinctual. Dan designs his pages very swiftly and they have a very nice feeling of spontaneity to them. That comes from all those years of doing adaptations of Disney movies and having to cram a 90-minute movie into a 28-page comic book. He had to get the likenesses of the actors right without enough stills and he had to replicate Disney special effects on a printed page. Dan's training in that area has been valuable in terms of learning composition and getting to the point where he can just sit down and put down an idea in quick visual terms. I'd say nine times out of ten, he's visually correct. Dan also did one of the best-selling comics in the history of mankind called SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON...one of the few comic books ever to be ripped off for a TV show.



Crossfire TM and (C) Evanier and Meugniot
Art (C) Dan Spigle

WENDI: Oh, really? It was a comic book before it was a TV show?

MARK: It was created by Del Connell and Chase Craig, with a little help from Carl Barks. Dan drew every single issue of it. Most of the stories were written by Gaylord DuBois. Someone at CBS saw it and thought it would make a great TV show. They decided to do it without buying the rights. Western Publishing never made an issue of it because of the comic book's popularity and partly because of the spillover from the TV series. SPACE FAMILY ROBINSON became one of the best-selling comic books of the '60s. It outsold SUPERMAN and ARCHIE and everything else that people thought sold well back then.

WENDI: That's incredible!

MARK: That was back in the days when a top selling comic book used to sell a million and a half copies.

WENDI: How do you think the influx of independent publishers has affected the comic book industry, and yourselves in particular?

MARK: The nice part about independent publishers is that they give you a chance to do *your* book rather than doing *their* book. The way we worked for years with comic book publishers was that they would come to you and say, "Here's the book we want to do. Here's the style we want it drawn in. Do it."

The case with independent publishers today is that the idea originates 99% of the time with the writer and the artist. Now with CROSSFIRE, we basically said, "Here's the book we want to do. We want to do it in our style, our way," and the people at Eclipse were perceptive enough, understanding enough, to give us free rein. So we have a book of which we are much prouder than anything we have done individually or collectively for someone else.

WENDI: I've noticed that Eclipse doesn't interfere much with panel structure or story techniques.

MARK: That's an example of them doing their book versus us doing our book. At DC Comics or Marvel Comics, the company and its official elected representatives are the final arbiter of what is good and what is not. They frequently will go in and have something redrawn or rewritten. They, on the editorial level, will alter the thrust of the book. They will change writers. They will change artists. The main feature...the attraction to me is the creative power that lies with the artists. I can't be replaced as the writer of CROSSFIRE. Dan can't be replaced as the artist. Eclipse is perfectly within their right to say, "We don't want to publish this book," and to decide not to publish it. But they're functioning as publishers, not as creators.

WENDI: That's the beauty of it. To get back to Dan's technique for a moment, I've noticed that the flashback sequences are framed in black. I thought it was a unique way of portraying the past.

DAN: You mean heavy black clear out to the edge of the page?

WENDI: Uh-huh.

DAN: I don't know if that was accidental or...Mark?

MARK: I don't know. Dan and I have been working together for so long that we have developed a kind of shorthand for a lot of what we do. I give him less instruction than any other artist I've ever worked with. And so, a lot of times we'll look at the finished product and it's hard to say which things in the staging were mine and which were his.

WENDI: So you're not as explicit with panels as you might be?

MARK: I give Dan a typed script, usually six pages at a time. An example is: "CROSSFIRE: Here I am jumping out the window..." Then I leave it to Dan to make it look visually interesting and brilliant. And he compensates for what I've done in my stupid story. [Laughter]

DAN: Not exactly that...but a lot of the time, Mark will make some little drawings at the bottom of the page. He has an idea, say, for breaking up the page that might be interesting, or something that he can see visually that maybe I cannot. He'll put a suggestion down there and that helps tremendously.

MARK: Basically, I get the idea—especially when we're trying something very complicated with the layout, or when we're doing one of my little tricks where we're making a TV GUIDE page or something.

WENDI: I like those pages. They're very clever.

MARK: Anything I give Dan is in the nature of a suggestion and he frequently improves or ignores what I do...always for the better. It's important for the artist to know what's on the writer's mind. He doesn't necessarily have to follow it precisely, but he has to know the way I see it. Since he has a far better visual sense than I, he is the one who makes it work as a comic book page. He's the one who has to worry about what pose is the character in precisely, how is he lit and what is the light source of the panel, and how does it all relate as a finished page...

WENDI: I particularly like Dan's full page scenes, such as the party scene in issue #1.

MARK: See, all I did there was tell Dan, "Draw a party."

DAN: Mark has a double page spread in this story that I'm working on right now that's the interior of a nightclub. It's just loaded with people and it's gonna be a lot of fun.

WENDI: There's a lot of good dialogue going on in your party scene.

MARK: I'll tell you something that people have to understand when they read a comic book like CROSSFIRE. The art and the story overlap completely. It's impossible for anyone to say of this book that they like the writing of this book or the artwork. You have to take them both or neither. What happens is that an awful lot of what Dan does helps me to make the story work. Let's say we have a scene that takes place in the office of someone who's very rich... and it's important for the reader to understand that this person is very rich. If I'm working with a lesser artist, I will put in a caption that says, "This man is very rich." I have to waste some of my precious page space establishing that fact. With an artist like Dan, I know that he's going to draw the office and design the man so that fact is immediately apparent. Therefore, I can go on with dialogue and have confidence that he will establish that story point visually.

DAN: I think that's the beauty of us working together for so many years. Mark knows what I'm interested in drawing and a lot of times he'll design his story around interesting subjects that I like.

MARK: Planes, boats, interesting settings... We had fun doing BLACKHAWK for that reason.

WENDI: Tell me about BLACKHAWK...

MARK: Yeah. We did BLACKHAWK for two years...but don't tell anybody at DC. They don't know about it! [Laughter]

WENDI: You once wrote in "Crosstalk" that Dan started drawing Blackhawk to look more like you from issue to issue.

MARK: Dan tends to draw from life more than most comic book artists. Most comic book artists draw from other comic book artists.

WENDI: Like a Xerox of a Xerox.

MARK: Yeah. It's like learning how to do Sullivan from watching Rich Little. We did BLACKHAWK together for a little over two years. It had gotten me back into comics because I'd stopped writing them for awhile. DC called and said, "Would you like to do BLACKHAWK with Dan Spigle?" I said, "I'll do a Pope John Paul comic with Dan Spigle!" [Laughter]

We did the book and we were very proud of it and very happy with it. A lot of people liked it...unfortunately almost all of them received the book for free! So we ended up with a book that basically DC was not interested in publishing. They had very little interest in publishing it and zero interest in promoting it. After two and a half years of, in fact, "raising someone else's kids," I felt that it would be nice to expend all that energy on characters over which Dan and I had more control, both creatively and financially. The problem with doing a book like

BLACKHAWK is that you get very possessive about doing someone else's comic. There are now people who get very possessive about the fact that they write SPIDER-MAN or they draw BATMAN or whatever. But ultimately, one day you're gone and someone else is drawing SPIDER-MAN or BATMAN. It really is like raising someone else's children. It's very painful when someone else takes them over and undoes everything you did. When we left BLACKHAWK, one of the things we did was to make certain that we took out everything we'd added to the book. Now we've turned around and done CROSSFIRE and that's never going to happen to CROSSFIRE. No one else will ever do the book. And if one day we decide to kill off a character, we can kill him off without checking with anyone. If we decide to alter the thrust of Crossfire's weaponry, we can do so without having to check with the Licensing Department to make sure that they aren't selling toys of it. These are all major concerns when you're doing an established comic book.

WENDI: Speaking of characters, will you ever bring Mintz, the counterfeiter, back to CROSSFIRE? I really like that character.

MARK: Mr. Mintz may turn up again, yes. I've got a story in mind for him. What happens is that I get a lot of weird ideas and then Dan gives me ideas and I keep putting off the ideas that interest me less. Eventually, I probably won't do some of them. I know what stories I want to do. I just don't know what order I'll do them in. Right now, we're killing off Marilyn Monroe for the 24th time...

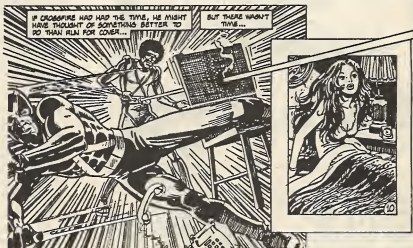
WENDI: Oh no!

DAN: I'm interested in finding out what happens. Mark only sends me five or six pages at a time. I'm dying to find out how he's going to end it.

MARK: So am I! [Laughter] Honestly. I have a vague idea of where it's going. Dan is on page 16 or so and I know roughly where the story's going. I just don't know how I'm going to get there.

WENDI: That seems to be a common problem with most writers.

MARK: Yeah. It's kind of fun sometimes to trap yourself and try to get out of it. All the issues of CROSSFIRE that you've read were done that way. I start on page 1 and go right through. Somewhere near the end, I think I'd better figure out how to end this. I can do this with Dan because I know that



Crossfire TM and (C) Evanier and Heugniot
Art (C) Dan Spigle

everything in the early pages is going to work visually and if I get lost, his visualizations will keep the story moving. It's really a very fun way to work. Part of the job that a writer has is keeping the artist interested. The number one cause today of bad comic book artwork is not bad comic book artists, it's bored comic book artists.

DAN: That's very true. I know that from when I worked with other writers, particularly at DC. They would send me work and, gosh, sometimes I just couldn't get interested in the story at all. And it showed. Your characters are not well drawn. The whole thing just sort of folds.

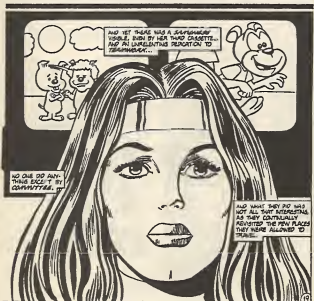
WENZI: Weren't the deadlines pretty unrealistic sometimes?

MARK: Deadlines aren't really a problem for us. Dan's very fast and I'm very fast. We have a pretty good track record with deadlines. When I have to send Dan six pages at a time, it's only because I try to keep my eleven other careers afloat! Deadlines aren't a problem.

Dan has trouble, for instance, if the story doesn't make sense. He wants to know where everybody is, how they're functioning, and how they relate to one another. When I make a mistake, he calls me up and says, "I don't understand on page 5 why character does this." I always have a good answer for this. I always say, "Oops!" [Laughter]

WENZI: Has Dan ever had to get you out of a spot on a story?

MARK: He's done it without realizing it sometimes. When the artwork comes in, it's so rich sometimes that it sparks new ideas. To me, there's this great glee in getting a package from Dan. All of a sudden, what I've written has become a comic book! It's not a comic book when it leaves here but Dan handles the pencils, the inking, and his daughter Carrie does the lettering. I don't see any of that and when I get it back, suddenly it's a comic book! Then I realize where I've gone wrong. I will frequently delete a word balloon because his visualization is so great that I don't need a caption that I'd written. Sometimes, the flow of his storytelling is so strong that I don't need dialogue. I'll take out words.



Crossfire's current lady-love, DnAgent Rainbow

WENZI: That's the sign of a good comic book: the integration of art and words--the words enhance the artwork but don't overpower it.

MARK: The packages get delivered early in the morning and I'm standing there in my underwear, just giggling like a kid because somehow what I've written on my word processor has suddenly turned into a comic book...magically!

DAN: The beauty, too, in working with Mark is that he's a cartoonist also and if there's a mistake, he can redo it. He doesn't have to send it back to me. I know that he can redraw and do just as well as I could. It works out fine that way. I like the way he sets up the type and puts in the background like a page out of *Variety*. For me, all I do there is draw the main character, knowing that Mark is going to lay out an authentic page from *Variety*.

MARK: Do you get the feeling that we're not really wild about each other? [Laughter]

WENZI: It's wonderful to hear. There are so many unhappy teams out there.

MARK: I think we're fortunate.

WENZI: Very fortunate. You also have a lot of the same background in DC Comics and Hanna-Barbera...

MARK: I was following Dan's work before I was in the comic book business. For a while, I didn't know his name because so many Western Publishing comic books were anonymous. I knew his style and the first time we worked together was on the SCOOBY-DOO comic book.

WENZI: I always loved SCOOBY-DOO.

MARK: That was fun. We were the SCOOBY-DOO "A-Team"! [Laughter] We did it for two years for Gold Key and then two years for Hanna-Barbera, published by Marvel. It was one of Dan's very brief forays into the humor field. Usually, he does more serious stuff. But it got so much attention that a lot of New York people who were not familiar with his work assumed that he was a funny animal artist...which he most decidedly is not. One of the few things that he can't draw is really funny animals.

DAN: Yeah.

WENZI: Well, it sounds like you did very well with SCOOBY-DOO.

MARK: Ordinarily, something like SCOOBY-DOO can get a little silly. But if you have an artist with a good background in dramatic staging and lighting, it gives that book a little extra dimension. The old houses were not drawn like a cartoon, they were drawn by Dan to be very realistic and scary. And we did a lot of period things with ghosts from the past. If I told Dan to draw a house from the 14th century, he knows what that is...

WENZI: Dan, have you studied architecture?

DAN: In art school, yes. I got a taste of it. I've always enjoyed period stories because it gave me a chance to sort of research them. I have an extensive scrap file. It makes it much easier. But it's a lot of fun. You can go out and buy another book on architecture when you need a certain type and add it to your collection. It makes it easier the next time.

WENZI: You mentioned "depth of panel" as being very important to you in a past interview with Cat Yronwode. Can you expand on that?

DAN: Well, I think that just to set people in a room, there has to be depth. You have to have a foreground,

a middleground, and a background. If you don't, it's a very flat, uninteresting panel. I try to give it depth. Sometimes when it's late in the day and I'm tired, I'll just put a hole in a certain part of the panel and then I'll just run lines off in all directions. I'll start my drawing that way and get a different perspective. It's kind of fun. You have to make it fun. If you don't, you're gonna dry up in a hurry. I enjoy each morning when I come out to the studio. I get up early and get started early. I love to get out here.

WENDI: Did you teach your daughter, Carrie, to letter? How long has she been in the business?

DAN: She's been lettering, oh, about five years now. What would you say, Mark?

MARK: She started lettering on some TARZAN comics we did.

DAN: Oh, that's right. I didn't teach her. I'm a terrible letterer.

MARK: I taught her. We were doing TARZAN and KORAK and we had Carrie lettering them. It helps Dan's creative process not to have to pencil something, then send it off to be lettered. Much of his work is in the inking phase. If he has to send it out, the spontaneity of the moment, the creation of the composition would be lost. But with Carrie, he could have it lettered at his convenience before or after inking. Later we used Carrie in the Hanna-Barbera comics, BLACKHAWK, and now she's gotten so good that OC is piling stuff up on her.

What's so strange is that I learned to letter from Mike Royer and then Carrie learned to letter from me. Then she recently lettered something that Mike drew. Then Mike came back and said, "That lettering looks kind of familiar." [Laughter] I do the lettering corrections in CROSSFIRE so I'm imitating her imitating me...and we're both imitating Mike Royer...she doesn't even know Mike Royer! [Laughter]

WENDI: What about the colorist?

MARK: Most of the DNAGENTS and CROSSFIREs are colored by Jo Meugniot, spouse to Will Meugniot. He co-created ONAGENTS with me. Dan makes suggestions, notations in the margins, and then Jo goes off and gives it her wonderful color sense.

WENDI: What do you both feel has been the proudest accomplishment throughout your careers?

DAN: Easily CROSSFIRE. I think that everything I've done has helped me with CROSSFIRE because as you go along, you change your techniques. I have. I've changed my penpoints, my brushes; each story I try to do better. As it comes out, I'll shake my head in dismay at things I've done. Through the years, I've evolved the best way of working for me. It seems to all come together in CROSSFIRE. I like it the best of anything I've ever done.

WENDI: What about you, Mark?

MARK: I'll second everything the man just said. CROSSFIRE is my favorite project. I'm now running around telling people who buy ONAGENTS and don't buy CROSSFIRE that, if they only have that much money to spend, they should spend it on CROSSFIRE. I love doing this book. It's a book that I could write forever. Dan couldn't hold out that long...! [Laughter] I enjoy doing it for 107 reasons, not the least of which is that I know it will always be well drawn and that whatever I write, Dan is going to turn the characters into very real people. This book could not be done with many other artists. It's



Crossfire TM and (C) Evanier and Meugniot
Art (C) Dan Spiegile

necessary for the book that the people are very real.

WENDI: When CROSSFIRE first came out, Al Gordon recommended that I pick it up. I've been reading it ever since.

MARK: Yeah, we pay Al a lot of money to say that! [Laughter]

WENDI: Do you foresee doing anything else in the future?

DAN: I hope we can do other things. I'd like to do a newspaper comic strip. Something funny, something where we could use Mark's talent the way I think it should be used...daily.

WENDI: That's the only problem with CROSSFIRE--it doesn't come out often enough. Maybe you could clone yourselves so you could have twice as much time to do all your projects.

MARK: We'll call ourselves the ONartists!

Be here next issue for an in-depth interview with Matt Wagner, creator of Comico's MAGE and GRENDL and writer/penciller of DC's upcoming DEMON mini-series.

ALTHOUGH THE AIR AROUND HIM SEETHES WITH MYSTICAL ENERGY, MARK DAGONS RETURNS TO HIS NATURAL FORM. IS IT EERIE IN ITS SILENCE.

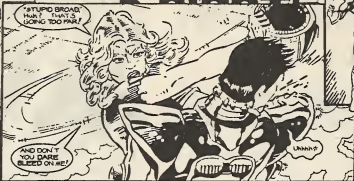
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ALL IN COLOR FOR A BUCK-&-A-HALF COLUMN OF CRITICISM & REVIEW

VIGILANTE #17-18

Good writers are known for taking an undeveloped character or a mediocre subject and transforming them into something wondrous. I thought the Vigilante a poor idea for a comic book--merely an update of Batman--but in Alan Moore's hands, issues 17 and 18 of VIGILANTE attempt something quite ambitious: to understand what cannot be understood--the psychopath who would kill his wife and rape his daughter. Clearly, this is not standard superhero fare.

The two-part tale entitled "Father's Day," written by Moore and drawn by Scottish artist Jim Baikie, details Carl Linnaker's rampage as he hunts for his daughter, finds her, and fights to keep her.

The first part is told from the point of view of the people who stand in his way. No attempt is made to understand Linnaker. The reader knows nothing of his motivation beyond his desire to find his daughter. Watching him in action as he murders without compunction, we see a sick, violent, obscene creature. The story makes the point that, to his victims, Linnaker cannot be comprehended.

Taken by itself, part one of "Father's Day" isn't one of Moore's best scripts. Although it has a terrific beginning and ending, there is a lapse in the plotting which is difficult to overlook. At the point when Moore must begin to pull his narrative threads together, the prostitute who is hiding daughter from father goes to a supermarket to pick up the girl's favorite breakfast cereal. And who is right behind her in line as she makes her purchase? No one else but the very person she is hiding the girl from, the father, waiting to make his own purchase.

Now I'd call that damned unlikely.

Instead of letting events and characters work themselves out to an inevitable end, Moore has used a poor coincidence to bring his storylines together. In order to keep the plot rolling, he has cheapened an otherwise honest and worthwhile story.

Flaws and all, Moore still writes at a level much higher than just about anyone else in the business. The opening scene generates a sense of fear and danger that never lets up; there is fresh characterization and witty dialogue; and a powerful symbolic image draws the first part to a close.

Still, it is the second part of "Father's Day" which turns the saga of Carl Linnaker into something of consequence. Part one deals with everyone else's reactions to and lack of comprehension of Linnaker; in part two, Moore attempts to get inside the mind of a man who has brutally killed two women, who has spent time in jail, who has raped his daughter... and who also cares about his daughter in some genuine parental way.

Moore uses captions which take snippets from a

letter Linnaker wrote to his daughter while in jail and photographs of idyllic moments between the two, taken during a vacation several years before. Again and again Moore juxtaposes the letter fragments and the photographs against the narrative action. By this method he is able to gain both an individual way of emphasizing things of importance to himself and to Linnaker. Slowly, the conflicts within the criminal are laid open. Also revealed is the love between parent and child despite everything. If the reader doesn't come away feeling empathy for Linnaker, he at least understands what the daughter means to the criminal.

Alan Moore has been revitalizing my interest in superheroes for some time now. He belongs to a very rare club: writers who can write superhero tales and not get beaten into the ground by the sheer ludicrousness of the genre. This is because he brings an uncommon amount of intelligence, wit, and personal feeling to his stories.

VIGILANTE 17 and 18 are not superb examples of Moore's gifts, but they are typical of his work in that they are economical, thoughtful, fresh, and like no one else's stories in the business.

-- JOE MAGEE

WHO'S WHO #3

OC's WHO'S WHO should not be dismissed as an imitation of the OFFICIAL MARVEL HANDBOOK. While Marvel's HANDBOOK was a collection of superhero mugshots and information for the superhero gamer, OC's WHO'S WHO presents each entry with a full picture setting and a story.

WHO'S WHO features a great variety of artists. Issue #3 included work from people like Dave Stevens, Trina Robbins, Timothy Truman, and Art Adams--artists not yet well known to newsstand comic buyers. The characters are drawn in action poses in front of a full background or a color overlay, and this gives each entry a kind of comic book pin-up quality.

Origins and numerical explanations of powers seem to be a big thing at Marvel, but the DC WHO'S WHO presents the group or character's history. Rather than devoting 500 words to a recap of a particular hero's origin, OC takes 500 words and tells not only the character's origin but also the character's reasoning and motivation for why s/he has done what s/he's done. Each write-up is a story in itself; it examines more than just statistics.

OC has a lot of history, and a historical WHO'S WHO is a great way to represent and reconcile their "multiverse." Issue #3 had a great juxtaposition of the old DC to the new. Pages 26 and 27 show Trina

Robbins' and Steve Leialoha's respective versions of the Cheetah. This is a fine example of DC's blending the old and the new in this very well edited book. DC's whole approach to presenting their universe is refreshing and much more aesthetically pleasing than looking at statistics that resemble a Playmate data sheet from Marvel's perennially "new" mutants.

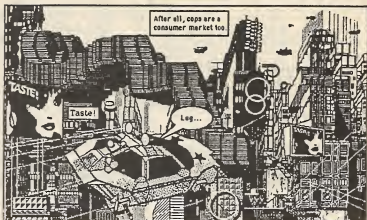
SECRET WARS II #1

"Who is the Beyonder?" Who cares?! Through twelve issues of SECRET WARS I we saw, or rather didn't see, the Beyonder: a being whose powers dwarf those of Galactus. But the Beyonder was not a hero or a villain, he was just a bored, nearly infinitely-powered being (maybe like a major comic book editor-in-chief) who got heroes and villains together to fight. Well, we never saw the Beyonder, and we really didn't see much fighting. We saw a lot of hero and villain politics, and we saw the Molecule Man given courage--or at least an inflated ego--kind of like the lion in *The Wizard of Oz*. But the major changes promised by a certain editor-in-chief either didn't happen or didn't last long enough for anyone to notice.

Maybe Jim Shooter feels that he owes us one. SECRET WARS II by Shooter, Milgrom, and Leialoha is a sequel to a great commercial success and, unlike most sequels, we cannot expect this one to be worse than the original--that's impossible! SECRET WARS I accomplished nothing; it stands as a testimonial to Jim Shooter's writing "ability" and seriously weakens the validity of comic books as storytelling entertainment. Yeah, I didn't like it.

So now the Beyonder is on earth and the only thing that can save us from him and Al Milgrom's pencils is Steve Leialoha. Steve can ink anybody and make them look good; the question is whether or not he will go to the extra trouble needed and make the humanitarian gesture to at least give us poor suckers something that looks good.

So the Beyonder is now on earth in one form or another, but he's not in the mood to play chess with heroes and villains as pieces. That's a standard thing for these god-like beings to do in the Marvel



The future world of SHATTER, courtesy of Saenz and Apple.

(C) First Comics, Inc.

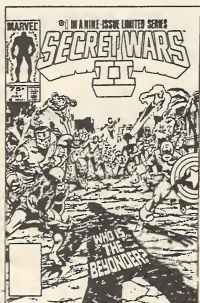
Universe and that's probably the closest description of what the big B was doing last series, although no one knows for sure. The Beyonder now desires experience through being a generic hero/villain. So the Beyonder is now on earth to experience the "super" life--not the human life. Experience is more the side-effect of events rather than the goal, and this new, unimproved Beyonder seems to have suddenly developed a childlike inquisitiveness and naivete that need explaining and justification. But I'm not going to hold my breath.

"Who is the Beyonder?" It's God's baby brother playing with matches called humans. Someone needs to give him a good spanking and tell him to leave us alone. The real question is "Why is the Beyonder?" The answer is in the realm of economics--philosophically and aesthetically there is no reason.

-- TOM HAUNERT

SHATTER SPECIAL #1

When I first heard about this comic book drawn on an Apple computer, I didn't think much of the idea. I've never been much of a proponent of this so-called computer age we've had thrust upon us. Aside from the filing and record-keeping capabilities of computer technology (not to mention making my beloved Canon "Typestar 5" possible), I prefer the human element. However, when I finally saw samples of Michael Saenz's computer-created art, I began to change my mind. Now that I've seen the final product, I'm completely convinced that computers are good for something more than robbing children of the will to read and reducing the job market by half. Saenz and his MacIntosh were able to imbue the art with much more depth and nuance than I would have thought possible, especially with the enhancement of Saenz's painted colors. There is a definite sameness to certain angles and background figures are wholly unconvincing, but I suspect the use of repetition is intentional, and the ultimate effect is cinematic and suggestive of a bleak, superficial world. The sterility of the computer art and the future world it illustrates, however, is tempered by the human talents and imaginations of Saenz and writer Peter Gillis. Though the story tries a little too hard to be alternately cynical, gritty, new wave, and devoid of anything but negative emotions as we somehow assume life in the future will be, "Headhunters" is a rather original twist on the standard private dick plot complicated by the presence of a beautiful,



(C) Marvel Comics Group

Again, SECRET WARS:
Was once enough?

Intriguing mystery woman, and it's full of apparent influences from a variety of sources, ranging from *Bladerunner* to Nelson Algren, James M. Cain, Dashiell Hammett, Steranko, and Moebius. Still, certain elements don't quite ring true. Attempts at portraying Jack Scratch's cool exterior seem more smug than hard-boiled, and lines like "Evening, Haj. How's life in the future?" sound contrived and affected, but the script is a good one, with lots of low-key surprises and droil throwaway lines.

SHATTER is unquestionably different, and I find its non-comic book influences and avant-garde touches refreshing, though a discernible hollowness makes me wonder how far they can carry the concept, and how long it will be before they resort to typical comic book plot devices. At any rate, I'll be happy to follow SHATTER in the back of JON SABLE, FREELANCE for the time being, and will probably continue to read it if and when it resumes in a title of its own, but let's hope SHATTER remains unique unto itself and that we don't witness the birth of a trend and a rash of computerized comic books.

-- MARK BURBEY

WILL EISNER'S QUARTERLY #4

Comic books don't get much respect, and if I had to name a group that respected them the least, I'd at least consider some of the people who put together deluxe comic book packages. I'm not talking about THE COMPLETE E.C. SEGAR POPEYE or Another Rainbow's Barks reprints, but books or original material. I'm sure everyone reading this can think of at least one case in which a publisher put pretty pictures and wretched writing in an expensive format, banking on the fact that content doesn't count for much with today's fans. That doesn't strike me as saying much for a medium that can conceivably say as much as any other form of expression man has devised.

So here we come to WILL EISNER'S QUARTERLY, a

deluxe-format magazine that actually justifies its deluxe format. Every feature in WEQ is full of admiration of and experimentation with the comic book form. Its new squareback form actually improves the magazine, since the added space allows for a greater variety of material. Eisner predominates the book, naturally, but his role in a given section may shift from writer/artist (both current and 1940s work) to interview moderator to subject of an article. All of it is thought-provoking, all of it is of high quality, all of it is required reading for anyone who is honestly interested in comics as communication.

I think that the book deserves a place in every fan's heart if only for the serialization of Eisner's graphic novel, A LIFE FORCE. Here the man who created the Spirit is able to tell a story at his own pace, with none of the restrictions imposed upon him by newspaper syndicates and frequent deadlines. The story is every bit as good as you'd expect it to be after all that build-up, with a complexity and insight into humanity that the seven-pagers of the '40s just didn't have room for. Reprints of Eisner's SPIRIT sell fairly well, and it's a little odd to think that A LIFE FORCE might appeal more to some people if there was simply a man in a mask running around somewhere in it.

LOVE IS HELL

As far as I know, this is the first collection of material from Matt Groening's weekly panel LIFE IN HELL, which appears locally in the *East Bay Express*. It's a rather steep \$6.95 for 34 pages of cartoons and is printed in a record-cover size which makes it extremely clumsy to store with anything but record albums. The general appearance of the book is that of one of those negligible non-books of dubious humor which appear and disappear in bookstores every day.

So buy it, already.

I'm afraid this book has become a personal favorite of mine and I'm getting a little too partisan for the rest of you, so I suppose I ought to explain why the average comic book reader would want to spend superhero book money on a slim volume dealing with the clumsy courtship rituals of a couple of rabbits. Well, it is my opinion that Matt Groening is perhaps the only cartoonist of this decade to truly work in the style of Harvey Kurtzman.

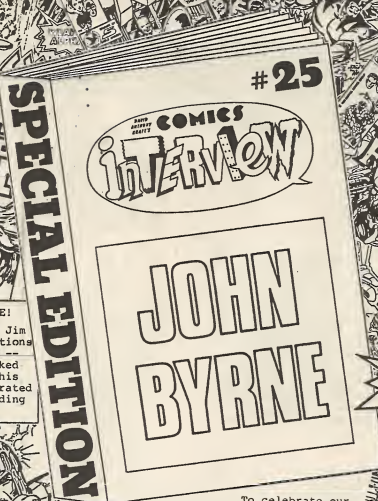
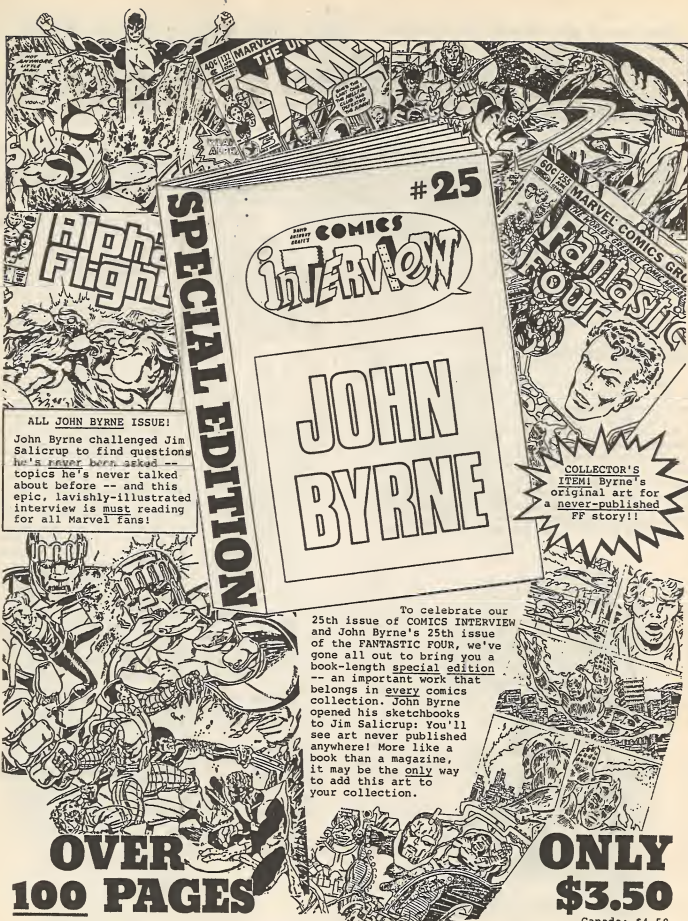
What really made Kurtzman's MAD such a masterpiece was the artist's trait of cutting through the lies of the media just as he had cut through the lies surrounding war in TWO-FISTED TALES. The consistency of his vision made MAD's parodies more than simply funny stories.

Groening's aim is somewhat similar, his target being the lies and illusions that surround love. His perceptions are often devastating and always funny--his two charts of "The 9 Types of Girl/Boyfriends" encompassing virtually any human being on earth. "The 22 Stages of Heartbreak" should be made into a poster and hung near any potential suicide, and "Your Guide to the Modern Creative Artistic Types" should share a similar service toward those boring individuals. Other standout drawings include a beautiful single panel concerning a child with a broken dish and the final page, a firm assertion of life that doesn't sound condescending.

-- ERIC YARBER



Real human drama in Eisner's A LIFE FORCE



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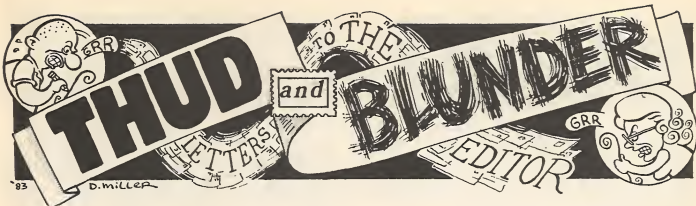


fathom

vortex
you can't keep a good man down

morningstar

monolith



Dear Reader,

This open letter concerns the practice of air freighting comics and the consequences of doing so as it affects fans, retailers, distributors, and publishers.

I have been collecting comics for 25 years, and for many years I was active in comic fandom, contributing art, articles, and fiction to numerous fan publications. I co-edited STAR-STUDD COMICS, one of the earliest fan-created superhero comics. I have been a comic convention chairman and have assisted on many other conventions. I was a mail order dealer for twenty years, serving the needs of comic fans long before most comic shops existed. In the summer of 1982, when we sold our catalog and subscriptions services to Mile High Comics, Lone Star was the second largest comic mail order retailer in the country. In 1977, I opened the first Lone Star Comics & Science Fiction, now a chain of four stores serving the Dallas/Ft. Worth metroplex. Lone Star is the largest specialty retailer of comics in Texas. Few comic fans and retailers have been associated with comics as long as I have and none can claim a greater devotion to the field. Therefore, both as a fan and a retailer, I feel that I am in a good position to address the problem of air freighting.

The consequences of air freighting, both immediate and long-range, are destructive to our industry. No true advantage is derived at any level while the disadvantages, after even casual examination, prove numerous. Unfortunately, some distributors have misled many retailers as to the advantage of air freighting. In their desire to expand, these distributors turn a blind eye to the best interests of their retailers and to the fans those retailers serve.

I am not alone in this opinion. In a letter dated December 21, 1984, and addressed to comic distributors, John Barrett, representing the Northern California Comic Dealers Association, had the following to say, "This correspondence is prompted by our concern for the negative impact that the air freighting of comics has on our industry... Air freighting is a predatory practice that brings no new customers or dollars into the industry and has no long-term benefits to existing customers. Once a retailer commences air freighting, there is a onetime, four-day advance on delivery when compared with ground freight; but from that point on, the customer must still wait thirty days for the next issue of any given monthly title. The cost of air freight to the retailer, typically 13% of the retail price of an item, cuts deeply into any profit margin and is ultimately passed on to the consumer in the form of less variety and quantity of product and services, higher back-issue prices, and lower discounts. Air freight only enables a retailer to damage another retailer while enriching the air freight companies, but does nothing

to create additional comic readers or new store clientele. The long-term, compound effect of air freighting could jeopardize every level of the comics industry including publishers, distributors, and retailers."

Before going further, let me note that air freight costs vary from area to area. For your area, air freight costs may be more or less than the 13% experienced by members of the Northern California Comic Dealers Association. But in every case, the cost of air freight will exceed the cost of conventional motor freight delivery.

Just what are the compound effects that could jeopardize every level of the comics industry?

The practice of air freight ought to be a major concern to publishers. Distributors are already so overlapped, thanks to air freight, that they constantly try to capture each other's accounts. Are the publishers best served by distributors who cluster around Sparta like fleas on a dog for no reason other than to air freight? Are the publishers' interests served by a system that encourages the eventual emergence of one or two mega-distributors with a tentacle in every part of the country?

Does any publisher look forward to dealing with just one or two nationwide distributors who could kill titles and even publishers by deciding not to carry certain publications? What would it be like, negotiating discounts and credit terms with a single distributor in that position? And what happens if a mega-distributor goes bankrupt? Can a publisher absorb such a loss, the equivalent of many distributors going under all at once? And does the problem end there? The mega-distributor, having gobbled up the competition, leaves no one out there to step in and take up the massive slack. Overnight, half the country could be without a delivery system. It could happen.

Prospects are no better at the distribution level, although there are distributors who will argue otherwise. Air freight is the easy way to expand. Tearing down is always easier than building up. What does a distributor do if he lacks confidence in his ability to build a growing network of stores in his territory? He becomes a predator. The predators want air freight. It allows him to expand by promising comics sooner than the non-air freighter.

Other distributors, those with the interests of the whole comics industry at heart, oppose air freight for the destructive force it is. They will point out the practical disadvantages of air freight. Distributors who air freight must still bring in some stock by truck in order to hold down shipping costs. This means each group of new issues must be processed twice. That makes for inefficiency and doubles the potential for error when comic pulls are done.

The time imperative created by the air freight mentality is equally damaging to good business practices. In order for a business to be well run and

most efficient, management must control scheduling. Scheduling is often impossible with air freight. Because the distributor who air freights has set out to beat his competitors--if only by hours--he finds himself at the mercy of every schedule change imposed by printing press breakdowns, flight delays, Christmas mail, or bad flying weather. When the comics do arrive, all other activity must stop while the comics are processed.

At the retail level, many stores have fallen for arguments that just are not true. Fellow retailers, there are distributors who will tell you air freight is wonderful. And they'll tell you how little it costs. Just pennies per book! But if the cost were really so insignificant, why are you expected to absorb *all* additional costs generated by air freight? And what do you get for your air freight dollars (pennies *do* add up to dollars)? You get your books a few days early. That's great--right? Wrong. The guy down the block, your friendly competitor, is no dummy. He feels threatened. He reacts. He air freights. The ripple spreads. Soon everyone is air freighting. And guess what? Nobody is getting his books "early." But everyone is paying for air freight. It's an unpleasant little cycle repeated too often around the country.

But that's only the immediate effect of air freight. Long term, anticipate another unpleasant possibility: the emergence of a near monopoly where one or two distributors control most of the country. If you think publishers would have problems negotiating with such a giant, imagine how you'd fare. In fact, you don't have to imagine. If you've been in this business long enough, you can remember when there was just one direct comic distributor. You'd have loved the credit terms--there weren't any; pre-payment by postdated check was the only option. And customer service? Well, once I was told, "We're responsible only for the delivery of the comics to you. We are not responsible for their being delivered in a sellable condition. And we do not accept returns." If you're eager to return to those golden days of yesteryear, then support air freight and help build a mega-distributor answerable to no one.

Comic fans, collectors, and readers, your interests aren't being served by air freight either. Early delivery is a smoke screen; there's no such thing. Remember the mega-distributor mentioned previously? Would you like your favorite shop to be supported by a single distribution giant with no alternative? It's competitive pressure that causes distributors to carry minor items you want. Imagine the things that wouldn't be in your favorite shop if the distributor dropped them because they weren't big profit items. Imagine your favorite shop gone altogether. It could happen. Plenty of comic stores have folded in the last few years and for many reasons. One more reason--the high cost of air freight--could be the straw that breaks the back of your store.

Clearly, many retailers and distributors find themselves air freighting not because they want to, but because the need has been imposed upon them by other short-sighted retailers and distributors who value predatory advantage above the common good of the industry. If you are among those whose business is damaged by the unnecessarily added cost burden of air freight, and if you would like the opportunity to channel your air freight time and money into more productive endeavors, I urge you to contact the appropriate parties and make it clear to them that you want an industry-wide system that eliminates air freight's predatory advantage and encourages real and honest growth for our whole industry.

The argument has been advanced that air freight came about as a solution to the inconsistencies of

Sparta and the truck lines. This simply isn't so. Air freight exists as a tool, a predatory tool designed to penetrate a competitor's territory and undermine his accounts. If air freight proponents were concerned only about the inconsistencies of Sparta and the truck lines, they would support a nationwide distributor release date, a simple policy already used by independent distributors and national magazines.

Simply put, such a system allows time for comics to travel as inexpensively as possible (by truck) from the printer to the distributor. The distributor would receive the comics two or three days before release time. What would he do with that time? He'd schedule work time and become more efficient. Without tight deadline pressures, he would also become more accurate. Retailers would experience fewer overages and underages and wrongly shipped titles.

But the advantages of a national release date at the distributor level go beyond improved efficiency and service. Such a system would be counterproductive to a distributor's seeking predatory expansion. Expansion, however, would still be possible, even into another distributor's territory. But without the long reach afforded by air freight, expansion would have to come about through top-notch service, good terms, and old-fashioned hard work. A distributor-level release date would thus encourage a nationwide network of distributors where territories would ebb and flow in response to service. There would also be less temptation to expand rapidly, a temptation that has been the downfall of more than one distributor already. Finally, a national release date would encourage distributors to cultivate new accounts in their own backyard rather than trying to snatch existing accounts elsewhere in the country.

Clearly, something must be done about air freight. I doubt it can be done at the retail level, at least in many parts of the country. Too many retailers are too frightened of their competition, misinformed, or beyond the reach of reason. If air freight is to be stopped and a more sane approach adopted, it must be brought about by a policy set by the major publishers. Such a policy, clearly defined and fairly administered, is not restraint of trade. Quite the contrary, air freight itself acts as a kind of trade restraint in that it diverts energies at every level away from our real goal, that of introducing more and more people to the pleasures of comic reading and collecting.

Concerned publishers, retailers, and distributors should have much to say on this matter. But comic fans should speak out, too. Make it clear to your local store that what you want is real substance--better selection, better service, all the things that a strong retail establishment should be able to provide its customers.

I cannot imagine air freight's continuing as it is. If it does, sooner or later a lot of people will be sorry they didn't move to address the problem before it became too destructive.

Let's act now!

Buddy Saunders
President
Lone Star Comics & Science Fiction
Arlington, TX

Well, readers, what are your thoughts on this subject? For the record, Comics & Comix wholeheartedly supports Buddy Saunders' position on the issue of air freighting and strongly encourages other retailers to abandon this expensive and potentially destructive practice.

And now, on to (perhaps) less political matters. The following letter was addressed to WIRE reviewer Tom Haunert.

Dear Tom,

Mike Friedrich was kind enough to send me issue #19 containing your review of *SISTERHOOD OF STEEL* #1. I found it interesting and thought some of the points you raised were quite valid. Overall, I'm very pleased with the kind of thought that the book is provoking from readers.

Although I've worked out most aspects of the *Sisterhood*, there's still a great deal to be resolved as I go along. Part of the problem with a bimonthly comic is that there's only so much I can squeeze in, especially with a first issue where the basic groundwork must be laid, yet an interesting and not overly complicated story must capture the readers' attention. There has to be conflict, strong emotion, opposing forces—all those things that make for good drama.

Lanna and Vandalis do come off more two-dimensional than I would like, but there's more to them than you think. Like many of our contemporary military leaders, Vandalis honestly believes that her brand of authority and rule would benefit the *Sisterhood*. And Lanna is not as pure and noble as she may seem. As Boronwe matures and learns more about human nature, we will learn with her, especially where Lanna is concerned.

But your major question about why the *Sisterhood* became mercenaries, rather than some other sort of independent society, is a very good one. One day, I may get to tell the *Ataluma* story in full detail. In issue #1, I used only broad strokes of the brush, out of necessity.

Ataluma wanted freedom and revenge—natural enough drives under the circumstances. She didn't deliberately set out to create a militaristic group. She wasn't a warrior herself at that point. Rather, it would be a gradual progression starting with their need to defend their island. As their skill in the area of defense grew, as their membership grew, so did their need for outside supplies. What else did they have to trade? Perhaps in the beginning, they used non-military skills, but it wouldn't be too far-fetched that they trade off their martial services for food and supplies. From there, it's easy to extrapolate a development into a more strictly ordered society and the exchange of money, as well as goods. Once they fell into such a pattern, especially when it provided a large measure of security, they'd tend to stick to it. Eventually, it would become a closed circle, feeding upon itself. *Ataluma* herself might be shocked to see what it has become.

What it really comes down to is that I wanted to do a book about female warriors and I wanted to examine a possible military order as it might have been had it really existed. I want the *Sisterhood* to be full of contradictions and paradoxes, just as each of us as individuals is made of dichotomies that often leave us wondering why people behave the way they do.

By focusing on Boronwe, I want to show the varying strengths and weaknesses of such a group. Is the *Sisterhood* unnatural, and if so to what extent? Can it last, or will its very nature tear it apart? Is it possible for a woman to foreswear a permanent bonding with a man, or the desire to have children, and be content to be a warrior? These are some of the issues I want to explore with this series. Is there honor in war at any time? Is it truly dishonorable to be a mercenary? Is there anyone in our armed forces today who isn't there because of the lure of money, training, security, some kind of pay-off? And is that any worse than being a blind idealist or unquestioning patriot?

Even if military life doesn't capture your interest, I hope the other elements will keep you reading. Thanks for the thoughts.

Sincerely yours,

Christy Marx
Wrightwood, CA



Okay—I'll admit it...I wanted a Charles Atlas body...in seven days.

Yep. I responded to the classic "Bully at the Beach" ad on the back of a comic book. Back then, I read *THE INCREDIBLE HULK*--and I wanted to look like him (ixnay on the purple pants, though).

So, I filled out that coupon--the one that never gave you enough room to write in the required information. As soon as I wrote "Don," I was already out of the dotted line.

After that sloppy job, I cut it out with a pair of scissors. I think the issue was an X-MEN numbered in the mid-nineties. (Hey--I was just a stupid kid! How was I to know that those new weird-looking goofs were gonna be famous someday?)

Then, I mailed it off. I remember it was during the mid-1970s' water shortage because I stapled the stamp on.

Of course, my ambition to be a super-hunk faded when I received their free booklet--it said physical work would be required.

While thumbing through the comic's classifieds, I also sent away for a switchblade comb...ooh...wow. They were the rage at my junior high. But by the time mine had arrived in the mail three months later, the fad was over.

And those "Be Taller" ads that guarantee height increase? I tried one and it really worked! (What they neglect to tell you is that a pair of 8-foot wooden stilts will be delivered to your house with a C.O.D. charge of \$39.95.)

But the best deal was the \$1.00 whoopee cushion from Johnson Smith Company. I got one and put it on a fat kid's chair in the school library at lunch. As he began to sit down, I turned to hide my chuckling face.

"Blaaaaa!" was the rude noise that ripped through the quiet room!

"You fell for the ol' whoopee cushion!" I exclaimed, rolling in laughter.

The fat kid looked at me questioningly and replied, "What whoopee cushion?"

Comics--what a place to shop.

'Til next time--I'm Mike Wallace. I'm Morley Safer. I'm Ed Bradley. I'm Diane Sawyer. And I'm Don Chin--with another edition of "Sooper Heroes." (Hey--where's Harry?)*

*Apologies to Mike Baron.

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AND EARLY
\$50
IN GAMES FREE



ENTER THE
ROBOT'S
PLAYGROUND
AND EARLY
\$50
IN TOYS FREE



TIME: 1935

PLACE: NEW YORK CITY

OCCUPATION: DIME MAGAZINE
WRITER

PSEUDONYMS: TOO MANY TO
COUNT

ALIAS: THE WORDSMITH

wordsmith

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SHIPPING IN AUGUST 1985 FROM

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RISING TO THE HEIGHTS!

Our Citrus Heights store has been in the Birdcage Walk off Sunrise Blvd. since October 1977. It's one of the oldest stores in the mall and we have plans to expand into the adjoining shop within the next few months. By this summer it'll be the largest shop in our chain--a whopping 3300 square feet!

Citrus Heights has another distinction--it's the information center for Games. This is largely due to J.W. Chapman, the CH Manager and Games Purchaser. He's been managing the Citrus store for the last five years and is our authority in the gaming field.

Marty Grossman has been working at Citrus Heights for the last three years and knows as much about toys and models as anyone. He's looking forward to the larger space...more room to feature toys!



J.W. CHAPMAN



MARTY GROSSMAN

Ed Hermann works wherever he's needed, and the day I came to visit Citrus heights was a day that he was there. Ed runs what's commonly known as "The Batcave"--it's our second warehouse. Ed calls himself a "jack-of-all trades." He was the assistant manager of CH for two years before his present "floating" position. His interests include new comics, games, and computers.

Citrus Heights gets a variety of customers both young and old. I hope you have a chance to drop in and visit, especially when it becomes the largest store in our chain. I'd say it'd be well worth it.

-- WENDI LEE

The Assistant Manager, Jeff McKillop, has been with Comics & Comix for about a year. He serves as the local Old Comics Purchaser.

Please help us in welcoming newcomer Dave Adkins. In the few weeks he's been with Citrus Heights, he's picked up a lot of information quickly and knows his way around the shop almost as if he's been there for years!

Our Regional Manager, Scott Maple, works out of Citrus Heights as does the General Manager, John Means. While you'll catch Scott at his desk for most of the day, you'll have a harder time finding John because he's on the road visiting one of the other stores 75% of the time.




DAVE ADKINS


ROMAN'S ARENA



By THOM ROMAN

 : Recommended

 : Recommended with reservations/For fans, collectors, or other specialized audiences only

 : Send in the lions!

By the time you read this, balloting in the COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE's annual Comic Fan Awards will be history. As I am writing this, however, I've just completed my ballot...and let me tell you, for a year which has seen as much junk as it has, I am truly amazed at how much *real* talent there is out there.

In fact, there was so much talent that I was unable to give everyone the applause I felt they deserved in the limited space CBG's ballot offered. "Favorite Title" was an easy one--as far as newsstand comics go, you just don't get better than the brilliant SWAMP THING--but the "Direct Sales" category was another matter. I chose Bill Loeb's wonderful frontier opus, JOURNEY, but at the expense of other, equally original works such as LOVE AND ROCKETS, ZOT!, COYTE, OMAHA THE CAT DANCER, and the criminally underrated MAGE. New artists and writers jumped into the scene this year, not only making their mark, but pushing some veterans out of their complacency as well, to turn out some of their best material in many a moon. Even Tom Orzechowski, long recognized as the most innovative letterer in the business, got some competition this year in the form of the dynamic Ken Bruzenak. And colorists are getting their share of the glory this year as well, thanks in no small part to the ground-breaking work of Lynn Varley on RONIN.

Other favorites? The satisfying (if somewhat talky) wrap-up of ELFQUEST, as well as WarP's demented new MYTHADVENTURES; the marked improvement of the Comico line, easily the classiest lookin' bunch since Capital Comics; COMICS INTERVIEW and AMAZING HEROES, both of which make it fun to be a fan again; Good Guy of the Year Mike Friedrich, whose efforts introduced many of us to the bizarre splendors of WARRIOR; R.C. Harvey, Dale Luciano and, most recently, Carter Scholz, writers who prove that THE COMICS JOURNAL's much touted-ideal of well-reasoned, intelligent criticism is indeed possible; the team of Raul and Luther Ironheart; 9-Jack-9 (that's my three votes, Scott); Baron and Rude and David Lloyd and Charles Truog and Alan Moore and Alan Moore again, because he's that good, and on and on...

Say what you will of last year's crop of talentless, mercenary mini-series, "graphic novels" that were anything but, and the monumental awfulness of "epics" such as SECRET WARS--this is still an exciting time to be in!

MOONSHADOW and THE GARGOYLE

While I'm not the first to do so (I know that Don Thompson is already on the bandwagon), I am going to do my Good Deed for the day by hipping you to the Next Big Name in the field--writer J. Marc DeMatteis, who has turned out two works of utter brilliance in the above-named titles.

MOONSHADOW is an indescribable delight: a fairy-tale clash between the Woodstock Generation and the Me Generation, with homages to everyone from Charles Dickens to Dan (ODD BOOKS) O'Neill. The use of "adult" language, as well as a streak of black humor a mile wide, has bent a few people out of shape--thanks, I think, to Marvel's deceptive marketing of the book--but it's worth a few jolts to watch this work of wonder unfold itself. This enchanting "fairy tale for grown-ups" is perfectly complemented by Jon Muth's exquisite, ethereal painting, as well as the elegant calligraphy of Charles Vess. It's your loss if you'd let a few naughty words turn you away.

Support-wise, THE GARGOYLE fares less well. The logo is exceptional, as are the painted covers by the likes of Bernie Wrightson--but I feel artist Mark Badger is still too new to properly convey the dark reaches of the spirit that DeMatteis is plumbing here. We read a powerful, disturbing story of an aged man coming to terms with the sins of his youth, marred by graphics reminiscent of Atlas-era Rich Buckler--scratchy and unsure. But it's a minor inconvenience at worst for this moody masterpiece. If J. Marc DeMatteis isn't as big a name as Alan Moore by this time next year...I'm gonna be very surprised.

AMBUSH BUG

Now *here's* where we separate the men from the fanboys. Do you remember Johnny DC? How about Henry Boltinoff and Super Turtle? Or Mort Weisinger's "April Fool" stories--or Mort Weisinger, for that matter? If your answer to any of the above is yes, then you should give Keith Giffen and Robert Fleming's crazed new series a try. If you answered no to all of the above--you're going to be awfully confused. AMBUSH BUG, you see, is a grand send-up of the DC of the '60s, in much the same way as Forbush-Man parodied Marvel in NOT BRAND ECH!--and if you aren't up on your Inferior Fives and go-go checks, you're missing out on at least half the fun. Everybody involved puts in a top-notch job, and has a grand time doing so, and it's too much about not very much...says the fanboy who buys each issue.

Well, it looks like reviews of CAMELOT 3000 and CAP'N QUICK and A FOOZLE will have to be delayed. Don't worry though, I'll get around to them...eventually...

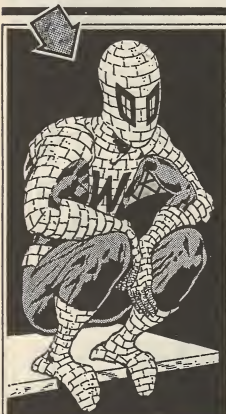
KITCHEN SINK PIPELINE

No.9 • May 1985 • Official Newsletter of Kitchen Sink Press, Inc. • No.2 Swamp Rd. • Princeton WI 54968 • Publishers of Comics & Books Since 1969

MEGATON MAN No. 4 FEATURING: THE MAN WHO CRAWLS UP WALLS!

TRENT PHLOOG'S 1st COLUMN WINS PULITZER PRIZE
(and, boy, is Megaton Man irked!) PAM JOINTLY LOST IN
MICHIGANI NORMAL LIFE TROUBLES SEE-THRU GIRL!
ENTER WALL-MANI SGT. STERANKOVICH! On Patrol!

Megaton Man No. 4 ships June 4th
AND LOOKING AHEAD -- MEGATON MAN No.5 ships AUG. 6



Peter Parkinglot—alias Wall Man— makes his amazing debut in Megaton Man No.4. Parkinglot is a freelance photographer for The Manhattan Project, the same daily Trent Phloog—alias Megaton Man—tells us.
Wall Man—whose spectacular wrist device can spray sticky bricks and mortar— gives some much needed romantic advice to M.M., who has designs on both columnist Pam Jointly and Stella Starlight (The See-Thru Girl).
Is Megaton Man just another shallow colossal-muscled superhero... or a human being with real, live, shallow feelings?

"JUST A FEW" INDUSTRY QUOTES:

"One of the hottest titles on the market today, Don Simpson's creation continues to surprise and delight readers." —Capital City Distribution, Juna solicitation sheet
"Donald Simpson is an exceptionally fine cartoonist... dead on target with his humor."
—Amazing Heroes
No. 68,
April 1985

"Megaton Men—Excellent stuff! We solicited No.2 late and didn't order enough. Don't be caught short —This book's a hit!"
—Bud Plant tip sheet for retailers (March)
CCD's "Top 100 Comics" for April 1985: Megaton Man No.3 was fast moving up the chart. It was one of only 10 titles designated "Hot Heat."
...And it was one of only FOUR comics to gain more than three points on the front-running X-MEN!

"Delightful and insightful. [Megaton Man's] parody of the Fantastic Four... makes Marvel's attempts at humor, well, laughable. This is not to be missed."
—Comics Buyer's Guide No.591 (3/15)



ANOTHER NEW TITLE FROM KITCHEN SINK? No... this is the splash page of Don Simpson's SGT. STERANKOVICH story which appears in MEGATON MAN No.4. You'll have to read the issue to find out what I.C.H.H.L. stands for.

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